

# SELF-PRAISE AS A STRATEGY OF SELF-PRESENTATION: A SOCIOPRAGMATICS STUDY OF INDONESIAN LINKEDIN USERS

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## ABSTRACT

*Reflecting on the current young-adult movement, #KaburAjaDulu, Indonesian LinkedIn users have been intensely growing their presence online. They talk about works and achievements to reach wider audiences, striving to get more opportunities in the workplace. This attempt is realized through various LinkedIn written posts containing self-praise. Self-praise, as a speech act, is often regarded as a face-threatening strategy. This study reinforces findings from previous research by demonstrating how such expressions can serve a functional and beneficial role in specific social media contexts, particularly on platforms like LinkedIn. Although previous studies have examined this phenomenon across different contexts and among speakers from diverse backgrounds, there remains a lack of comprehensive research specifically focusing on Indonesian LinkedIn users. Thus, this study aims to examine the speech act strategy associated with self-praise which is identified as self-presentation within the Indonesian LinkedIn users. To achieve this, we collected achievement-related posts from users across various professional backgrounds, covering the period from January 2024 to February 2025. The term is chosen since it captures the immediate effect of #KaburAjaDulu. Drawing from Hiwa Weisi and Sedigheh Hajizadeh's (2025) framework analysis of self-presentation and self-praise tactics, the findings show that Indonesian LinkedIn users express self-praise using three approaches, highlighting responsibility and credit, reporting external events as a testament, and explicitly using positive lexis. On the contrary, the least used strategy of self-praise is the one using adverbial praise. The result reinforces Indonesian people's tendency to use indirect speech rather than direct speech to communicate self-praise. It represents how cultural views of subtlety and harmony are still deeply embedded in the work community. What sets this study apart is its identification of a tendency to use gratitude expressions as a reflection of politeness strategies. Additionally, personal storytelling emerges as a technique for self-branding and strengthening users' professional image in the job market. These self-praise approaches are still heavily regarded as high-context communication, which often corresponds to Eastern culture. However, the work community views self-praise positively without any means to threaten maxims of modesty. The findings of this study can provide a foundation for more in-depth investigations into self-praise strategies within the broader context of the Indonesian community.*

**Keywords:** *speech act, self-praise, Indonesian LinkedIn users*

## ABSTRAK

*Merenungkan gerakan anak muda masa kini, #KaburAjaDulu, pengguna LinkedIn Indonesia semakin aktif membangun eksistensi mereka secara daring dengan membagikan unggahan tentang pekerjaan dan pencapaian untuk menjangkau audiens yang lebih luas demi memperoleh lebih banyak peluang kerja. Upaya ini sering kali diwujudkan melalui bentuk pujian terhadap diri sendiri (self-praise) yang sebagai tindak tutur kerap dianggap mengancam muka (face-threatening). Studi ini memperkuat temuan sebelumnya dengan menunjukkan bahwa ekspresi self-praise dapat berperan fungsional dan menguntungkan dalam konteks media sosial tertentu, terutama LinkedIn. Meskipun fenomena ini telah dikaji dalam berbagai konteks global, masih kurang riset komprehensif yang secara khusus membahas pengguna LinkedIn asal Indonesia. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji strategi tindak tutur self-praise yang termasuk dalam self-presentation pada unggahan pencapaian dari pengguna dengan latar belakang profesional beragam dalam periode Januari 2024 hingga Februari 2025—periode yang dipilih karena mencerminkan pengaruh langsung dari tren #KaburAjaDulu. Mengacu pada kerangka Hiwa Weisi dan Sedigheh Hajizadeh (2025), temuan menunjukkan bahwa pengguna LinkedIn Indonesia mengekspresikan self-praise melalui tiga pendekatan utama: menonjolkan tanggung jawab dan kontribusi, melaporkan peristiwa eksternal sebagai pembuktian, dan menggunakan leksikon positif secara eksplisit, sementara strategi yang paling jarang digunakan adalah pujian dengan kata keterangan (adverbial praise). Hasil ini menunjukkan kecenderungan masyarakat Indonesia untuk menggunakan tuturan tidak langsung, mencerminkan nilai budaya akan kesantunan dan harmoni yang masih kuat dalam komunitas kerja. Keunikan studi ini terletak pada temuan bahwa ekspresi syukur digunakan sebagai strategi kesopanan, dan penceritaan pribadi menjadi teknik self-branding untuk memperkuat citra profesional pengguna di pasar kerja. Meskipun termasuk dalam komunikasi berkonteks tinggi yang khas budaya Timur, self-praise dalam konteks ini diterima secara positif oleh komunitas profesional tanpa dianggap melanggar prinsip kesederhanaan. Temuan ini dapat menjadi landasan bagi kajian lebih lanjut mengenai strategi self-praise dalam masyarakat Indonesia secara umum.*

**Kata kunci:** *tindak tutur, pujian terhadap diri sendiri, pengguna LinkedIn Indonesia*

## INTRODUCTION

The modesty maxim proposed by Leech (1983) explains that we have to minimize praise of self and to maximize dispraise of self. In other words, self-praise as a form of speech act is considered to be a strategy of a face-threatening act. It includes the act of displaying one's achievements or strengths in the public eye. Self-praise might be considered socially sensitive or face-threatening behavior for certain cultures where modesty is a core value, such as in many Asian societies. Nevertheless, in specific discourse settings, self-praise can be considered a significant strategy for self-presentation.

LinkedIn, as a platform to grow a professional network and to help in job or internship searching, indicates the need to practice self-praise. Tobback (2019) investigated LinkedIn summaries written by users from France and the United States and found that, although LinkedIn serves as a platform where showcasing one's skills is essential, not all self-promotional strategies are necessarily viewed as direct self-praise. In other words, while users often enhance their profiles using qualitative elements (such as adjectives like *excellent* or *thought-provoking*) and quantitative details (such as years of work experience), many of these strategies are interpreted as indirect. This perception is shaped by the unique nature of LinkedIn summaries and the broader purpose of the platform itself.

In Iranian contexts, the study has also been extended to explore the Iranian professional users' summaries in LinkedIn. The findings suggest that Iranian LinkedIn users employ self-presentation and self-praise techniques to project an ideal image and promote the self in order to get recognition, affecting job recruiters (Weisi and Hajizadeh, 2025). Furthermore, self-praise in the context of an online community of pick-up artists also reveals the relevancy of three kinds of self-praise: brag statements, proxy brags, and evidential brags (Rüdiger and Dayter, 2020).

Rüdiger and Dayter (2020) also propose the self-praise iceberg. The iceberg model is structured around two key dimensions of speech acts related to self-praise: direct versus indirect and explicit versus implicit. A direct speech act uses a conventional form that clearly expresses the intended meaning. In this case, self-praise is easily identifiable because it involves openly attributing a positive quality to oneself. In contrast, an indirect speech act is conveyed through a different speech act, such as expressing a complaint that indirectly serves to praise oneself (Thomas, 1995). Similarly, explicit self-praise signals its intention through the use of positive evaluative language or performative verbs like *brag*. On the other hand, implicit self-praise lacks overt linguistic markers of positive evaluation, making the praise less immediately apparent (Rüdiger & Dayter, 2020).

Despite the interest in pragmatic strategies, research on self-praise and self-presentation on social media across various cultures remains unexplored. Considering this, the present investigation can also shed light on the rationale behind using LinkedIn, resulting in a deeper understanding of how language is utilized for self-presentation and self-praise in Indonesian culture. The focus will be on self-praise strategies used in LinkedIn written posts posted by various Indonesian users accomplished achievements.

This study provides new strategies of self-praise, which suggest the characteristics of Indonesian people. The significant use of "grateful for the" followed by some nouns, such as *opportunity*, *chance*, etc., is present in their posts. These findings reflect the representation of Indonesian people as a high-context culture.

## METHODOLOGY

This research aims to qualitatively analyse the self-praise and self-presentation strategies in the LinkedIn platform's corpus of Indonesian users. It examines the pragmatic self-praise mechanisms identified within the corpus rather than highlighting quantitative distinctions of the variables. The period taken for this study covers the posts from January 2024 to February 2025. The reason for choosing this term is driven by the emerging effect of #KaburAjaDulu, which reflects the critical stance of Indonesians who are struggling to find jobs in their own country.

Furthermore, this study adopts the conceptual framework proposed by Weisi & Hajizadeh (2025), which was inspired by the self-presentation strategies proposed by Tedeschi (1981), Lee et al. (1999), and Rüdiger and Dayter's self-praise (2020). However, the adopt framework focuses on speech act dimensions associated with self-praise identified as self-presentation or Impression Management (IM) tactics. Accordingly, in this study, we found distinct tactics within the data that suggest the characteristics of Indonesian people. They are included within the indirect speech act, the expression of gratitude, and personal storytelling.

We categorize the self-presentation and self-praise tactics into four main categories which are 1) Ingratiation through explicit-implicit speech act, 2) Entitlement through indirect-direct speech act, 3) Enhancement through direct-indirect speech act, 4) Basking through indirect speech act, and finally the distinct findings in our data is 5) Specific characteristics of Indonesian context. The detailed list of explanations about self-presentation and self-praise tactics can be seen in Weisi and Hajizadeh (2025).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the characteristics of Indonesian LinkedIn users by examining their use of self-presentation and self-praise strategies within a pragmatic framework. Adopting the analytical approach proposed by Weisi and Hajizadeh (2025), the research focused on how these users utilize such strategies to convey their qualities and construct professional identities through achievement-oriented posts on the platform. A detailed overview of the frequency with which each tactic appears is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The Self-presentation and Self-praise Tactics of Indonesian LinkedIn Users

Self-presentation and Self-praise Tactics	Frequency of Appearances
<b><i>Ingratiation through Explicit-Implicit Speech Act</i></b>	
Explicitly using positive evaluative lexis	23
Doing favours for others	8
Using adverbial praise	3
Using rhetorical questions	7
	<b>41</b>
<b><i>Entitlement through Indirect-Direct Speech Act</i></b>	
Reporting external events as a testament	29
Highlighting responsibility and credit	35
Assisting others in achieving success	8
Transition from implicit to explicit self-praise	9
	<b>81</b>
<b><i>Enhancement through Direct-Indirect Speech Act</i></b>	
Ensuring the ability to fulfil desires	6
Demonstrating superior performance	21
Advertising qualities indirectly	5
	<b>32</b>
<b><i>Basking through Indirect Speech Act</i></b>	
Association with prestigious organisations	17
Employing quotations and photos of prominent figures	6
Demonstration of charitable actions	5
	<b>28</b>
<b><i>Specific characteristics of Indonesian contexts</i></b>	
Expression of Gratitude	13
Personal storytelling	19
	<b>32</b>

As shown in Table 1, the most frequently used tactic overall is entitlement, which is conveyed through a combination of indirect and direct speech acts. This is followed by ingratiation, realized through explicit and implicit speech acts, and enhancement, expressed through direct and indirect speech acts. In addition, two notable patterns emerge that reflect the distinct nature of self-praise and self-presentation in the Indonesian context: the use of expressions of gratitude and personal storytelling. On the other hand, the least commonly used tactic is basking through indirect speech acts. The following section will provide a detailed discussion of each of these strategies.

### ***Ingratiation through explicit-implicit speech act***

Indonesian LinkedIn users employ tactics that involve positive lexis in their achievement posts. Positive adjectives such as thrilled, incredible, and inspiring appear in one of the posts to frame the event and the speaker's experience in a highly favorable light. For instance, a master student shares his self-reflection of the latest achievement by narrating his experience as a journey. *"I also emphasized the importance of taking risks, staying curious, and being open to failure—because these are the experiences that will help you grow."* This ingratiation is the writer's attempt to demonstrate failure and perseverance in positive lexemes, thus allowing him to be more relatable and likable to the evaluator or audience. Additionally, the positive lexis, wow-ed, appears to compliment someone else: *"The session wouldn't have been complete without the amazing [name of an expert], who wowed everyone with his talk on personal branding."* By elevating others, the writer tries to be less face-threatening while maintaining his qualities indirectly.

Creating a favorable scenario for self-praise is an attempt to avoid bragging accusations. Workers may produce a story of hard work in the process of earning valuable things to show their qualities. A graphic designer, MV, illustrates how doing favors for others is a subtle manifestation of demonstrating one's skills. *"I was also involved in crafting content for [name of a company] ... Each brand had a different approach, but the goal remained the same: educate, build awareness, and drive conversions."* The excerpt exemplifies how graphic design also includes additional work to produce effective content that delivers results. This implicit speech also focuses on the process and outcome to maximize the acceptance of self-praise.

A possible linguistic marker to illustrate someone's proficiency can be seen through the use of adverbs. A positive adverbial praise, actively on *"Being open to and actively seeking opportunities is vital,"* functions as a tool to provide a positive emphasis of the writer's viewpoint. By communicating an opinion, the post writer elucidates indirect self-praise that would gain acceptance from the evaluator, preaching for flexibility and continuous perseverance. Ingratiation can also appear as rhetorical questions, which form an impression on the reader. The utterance from an HR, *"Since last year, I had been thinking, 'What's next for my career?'"* constantly attracts the audience's attention while implicitly demonstrating his extensive experience as an HR professional. This makes the self-praise subtler without eliminating the fact that the post writer has a valuable track record in his expertise.

### ***Entitlement through indirect-direct speech act***

As seen in Table 1, the most prevalent tactics used by Indonesian LinkedIn users in their posts are reporting external events as a testament and highlighting responsibility and credit. In terms of reporting external events as a testament, a person can incorporate his or her indirect self-praise, seen in *"I've just returned from an incredible international conference in Malaysia."* Through this post, an educational and mental health counselor shares a significant event that reflects their involvement in professional development, indirectly affirming their expertise and commitment to their field.

In the counselor posts, such as *"I've gained valuable insights that will greatly impact my work moving forward,"* she applies what she has learned, emphasizing their responsibility in using new knowledge for future professional growth. A currently laid-off marketer, despite being in a disadvantaged position, produces self-praise by focusing on his competencies and credits, *"If your company is looking for a passionate marketer who can: Build customer-first strategies that deliver real impact,"* to evoke a sense of accountability.

By assisting others in achieving success, a social consultant not only creates a self-presentation that benefits their image but also contributes to the surroundings and gains accountability. From the utterance *"I engaged with the community to explore potential social, environmental, and climate change impacts,"* the social consultant develops a positive impression on the evaluators and does not necessarily threaten their faces, even though he demonstrates measurable and impactful acts to the community.

Lastly, some achievement posts utilize a transition from implicit to explicit self-praise in narrating their success. A content creator, before elaborating her work experience, starts the post with a reflective statement, *"I wouldn't be anything today if it wasn't for [the speaker herself] who couldn't do anything back then."* This implicit form of praise is directly followed by a coverage of a company's internal staff appreciation event. The speaker continues with a more explicit speech to illustrate her accomplishment, *"I am honored to receive the Best Performance Staff award for the Content Creator category on this occasion,"* as a way to mitigate the straightforward self-praise. A sudden shift from a first person to a third person subject in *"A woman who was determined to achieve her dreams"* also portrays the speaker's strategy to minimize threatening the audience's face by employing a strategy to blur her agency.

### ***Enhancement through direct-indirect speech act***

Some LinkedIn users ensure the ability to fulfill the evaluator's desire by guaranteeing that their actions are achievable and feasible. We have steps to emphasize that carrying this message requires a combination of several key elements, such as in this excerpt: *"Confidence/Passion: ... join Communities - Engaging with communities is invaluable for networking and personal branding. It helps you stay informed about industry trends and connect with like-minded individuals."* The speaker's point of view exposes the audience to achievable actions, notably joining communities as a self-improvement in personal branding. The speaker disguises his successful attempt at maintaining a professional connection by providing informative statements that seemingly would inspire the reader. He subtly minimizes the possibility of threatening the audience's face.

In this section, demonstrating superior performance is the dominant tactic for conveying self-praise. Superior performance is realized through an exceptional experience that uniquely belongs to the speaker. *"A very humbling experience was presenting this topic... sharing the stage with esteemed figures in the field."* Through this excerpt, the speaker explicitly demonstrates his opportunity to be on the same stage as the experts. A cabin crew from a reputable airline delivers a direct speech in self-praise using strong positive adjectives. The phrase at the highest level on *"It's an opportunity to contribute, innovate, and enhance the customer experience at the highest level,"* displays an exceptional experience that the speaker wants to highlight. The statement first functions as an invitation to collaborate, then it becomes an indirect speech act for the speaker to deliver self-praise, particularly emphasizing his experience within a prestigious organization.

Some LinkedIn users also write self-praise by advertising their qualities indirectly. LinkedIn is one of the platforms where one can promote a product or skill. A sales coordinator exemplifies how promoting his company and its products contributes to elevating self-praise. Occasionally, the innovation and experience built up in his advertising increase visibility and engagement from the audience. In the context of *"Before January ends, I'd like to share some of my experiences at [a company], a company I'm incredibly proud to be a part of."* The user first promotes his reputable company by stating that he is proud. He continues to mention a product, *"November: We proudly launched our latest product, UNLIMITED SUKA-SUKA, and helped inform our outlet partners about it through a Gathering Outlets event"*. In this term, he subtly shows his competencies and experiences through the promotion and successful launch of the product, *UNLIMITED SUKA-SUKA*.

### ***Basking through indirect speech act***

Indonesian LinkedIn users employ this tactic to emphasise the value of their association with a well-known community. They often include their affiliation with certain institutions, organizations, figures, and prestigious events in their achievement posts. The intention is to present their credibility, professional status, and social level. These connections subtly suggest that the users share the same level of success as the institutions or communities they are affiliated with, even though this implication is conveyed without the use of any direct speech act.

This modified self-praise can be seen from excerpts such as *"As part of the [name of the team] supported by [reputable institutions], and the [one of the ministries], our recent Project Preparation Grant Mission was conducted."* One of the users who is a social consultant highlighted his contributions on the recent project by positioning references to their connection with high-status institutions. This placement emphasizes the honor associated with being affiliated with such organizations and subtly enhances their professional image.

Furthermore, in this study, there are no direct quotes or photos of prominent figures; instead, a lecturer mentioned a few notable experts from reputable universities and organisations with whom he got

the opportunity to share a panel with in a prestigious conference. It can be seen from excerpts “*Fantastic to shared panel with [name of experts] (the name of institutions or organisations).*”

Lastly, the least frequent posts are those that display charitable actions of Indonesian LinkedIn users. A marketer in tourism demonstrates his affiliation with one of the public service agencies. He showcased his involvement in voluntary activities in order to enhance his reputation in the public eye. For instance, the user referenced the agency’s commitment, which aligned with his sincerity and devotion in regards to humanitarian actions. It can be seen from “[*The name of Public Service Agency*]’s involvement in this crucial operation, ... underscores the agency’s commitment to ensuring safe and smooth sea transportation during peak travel seasons”. The aim is to be perceived as benevolent and reliable to the audience.

### ***Specific characteristics of Indonesian contexts***

As discussed before, this study employs distinct strategies in conveying self-praise compared to previous literature. Indonesian LinkedIn users often modified their self-praise with the expression of gratitude, which aligned with a strategy of politeness, and with personal storytelling, which was conveyed through narration.

In Indonesian LinkedIn users’ posts, the expressions of appreciation are prevalent in helping maintain a humble tone while still highlighting achievement. A PhD student communicates success in one prestigious conference while staying grounded through expressions of gratitude. It can be seen from “*I am also grateful for the questions and feedbacks that I received from the participants.*” She tried to acknowledge all parties that helped her succeed in presenting the research at the conference. This portrays the user’s academic professionalism and makes it respectable to the audience.

The soft self-praise through the narrative approach also appears within the corpus data. A bachelor student wrote in her post, “*My connection with [the name of institution] began in high school...*” She employs personal storytelling about her experience with one of the institutions in inclusive education. This narrative reflects dedication and long-term passion, subtly praising the user’s consistent interest and motivation in inclusive education. Rather than focusing directly on personal accomplishment, the user chooses to spotlight the emotional value of the experience, which indirectly strengthens her professional image.

The findings revealed that Indonesian LinkedIn users predominantly employed various speech acts, particularly self-praise and assertive self-presentation strategies, which align with the cultural traits commonly associated with Eastern societies. A study investigating self-praise in Japanese conversation found that modesty and indirectness are salient features of Japanese politeness (Itakura, 2022). This was represented by how self-praise was modified in multiple layers consisting of hedges, turn-taking strategies, and narrative strategies during storytelling. Similarly, the findings in this study reveal that self-praise in online contexts is being modified through personal storytelling as a way to build a strong identity or self-branding.

Despite the achievement posts written in English, Indonesian LinkedIn users tend to adopt a modest attitude toward their writing. In a similar way, Dendenne (2021) investigated self-praise among non-native English users (Algeria, Brazil, Indonesia, Japan, Taiwan, and the Netherlands) in an online setting and revealed that they share the same characteristics of self-praise. Self-praise is conveyed through greetings, compliments, and self-denigration.

Self-praise strategies in Chinese microblog users reveal that they mainly used explicit self-praise without modification, modified explicit self-praise, and implicit self-praise. The high frequency of explicit self-praise seems to contradict the constraints on self-praise in Chinese individuals, particularly the self-denigration principle (Gu, 1990) and the modesty maxim (Leech, 1983). The reason behind these findings might be suggested by the concept of anonymity in online communication, where self-praise does not violate the pragmatic norm in online communication as it does in face-to-face communication (Dayter, 2014; Tobback, 2019; Ren and Guo, 2020).

In contrast, the concept of anonymity does not apply in this study since the corpus data are compiled from platforms like LinkedIn, which show the real identity of a job seeker. The identification of self-praise mainly tends to employ more indirect speech acts, such as highlighting responsibility and credit, reporting external events as a testament. The third place then covers the explicit self-praise by explicitly using positive evaluative lexis. These findings reflect the characteristics of Eastern people with a high-context or collectivist culture, who tend to communicate indirectly (Velez-Calle et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2021; Tabata and Vrij, 2023).

All in all, this study addresses the gap in the heavy discussion of anglocentric perspectives by demonstrating that self-praise is more socially acceptable in everyday life than previously assumed (Dayter, 2016, 2018). It highlights how self-praise is practiced on professional platforms like LinkedIn, where creating a positive self-image is essential. The primary motivation behind self-praise appears to be self-presentation, an expression of internal thoughts and perceptions. These self-referential thoughts, or *de se* thoughts, often involve the desire to shape or maintain a favorable public image. In this context, self-praise becomes part of the broader meaning-making process, helping individuals understand themselves and be understood by others (Xie & Tong, 2022). Therefore, the importance of self-praise in this study is closely tied to the purpose of LinkedIn as a platform. As van Zoonen et al. (2018) suggest, LinkedIn users engage in positive self-disclosure to improve job prospects or increase their visibility and recognition within their existing professional communities (Johnson et al., 2016).

## CONCLUSION

The study has found that self-presentation and self-praise strategies employed by Indonesian LinkedIn users highlight how cultural values shape online communication styles. Drawing on the framework of self-presentation tactics and speech act theory, the analysis revealed that Indonesian users predominantly employ indirect and polite forms of self-praise. Among the strategies, the most frequent was entitlement, often realized through highlighting responsibility and reporting external achievements. This was followed by ingratiation and enhancement, both using a mix of explicit and implicit language. The least employed strategy was basking, reflecting the subtlety typical of collectivist cultures.

A key finding unique to the Indonesian context was the use of gratitude expressions and personal storytelling as culturally grounded forms of self-praise. These approaches align with the modesty maxim proposed by Leech (1983), indicating a preference for maintaining face while still conveying professional competence and accomplishments. Even though LinkedIn encourages users to promote their skills openly and the use of the English language, Indonesian users tend to do so in ways that reflect humility and collectivist values.

The findings in this study are not final but rather serve as a foundation for future research on self-praise within the Indonesian context. Further studies could explore self-praise strategies across different professions or gender identities on LinkedIn to uncover significant patterns of self-branding. Moreover, another platform that is also evolving as a space for self-branding, such as Instagram, could be explored to gain deeper insights into self-praise practices. Finally, future research should consider expanding the dataset to include self-praise expressions in the Indonesian language.

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